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BY

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MORE LIGHT ON THE PEACE CONFERENCE [1]

WHETHER the modern knight-errant who sallied forth three years ago panoplied with righteousness and in quest of a democratic world-order found his Holy Grail or did but battle against windmills at Paris, has been much debated, especially by those who beheld the Peace Conference from afar through the none too transparent medium of the printed page. After so plausible an outsider as Dr. Dillon, in his *Inside Story of the Peace Conference,* had portrayed Mr. Wilson as floundering in the meshes of cynical secret diplomacy, after an English economist had described him as a slow-witted "old Presbyterian" easily "bamboozled" by the cunning adepts of Old-World *Realpolitik,* what was the American public to think? The two volumes before us do much to resolve popular doubts. Both are genuinely "inside" stories. One is essentially a personal narrative of Mr. Lansing's humiliating experiences as the President's subordinate in Paris. The other is even more illuminating, for it comprises a series of monographs, originally delivered as lectures, by two of the American plenipotentiaries, Colonel House and General Bliss, and by fourteen of the American "experts" who actually had a hand in making the treaty. To be sure, no one tells quite all he knows. If the old tradition that a diplomat is "an honest man sent abroad to lie for his country" is passing away, it still remains a point of honor with diplomats not to tell the whole truth, even to their fellow-countrymen. However, there are enough indiscretions in these two books to give the public more than a little enlightenment.

Especially indiscreet is Mr. Lansing in his endeavor to prove that the President's greatest blunder was failure to recognize the prescient statesmanship of the Secretary of State. What Mr. Lansing really succeeds in proving by this naïve *apologia pro vita sua* is the ignominious futility of his own position at the Peace Conference. The Woodrow Wilson sketched for us by Mr. Lansing is fair-minded and

[1] *The Peace Negotiations, A Personal Narrative.* By ROBERT LANSING. Boston and New York, Houghton Mifflin Company, 1921.—328 pp.

What Really Happened at Paris; The Story of the Peace Conference, 1918-1919, by American Delegates. Edited by EDWARD MANDELL HOUSE and CHARLES SEYMOUR. New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1921.—xvi, 528 pp.

open to advice until 1918 (pp. 12, 24); then, as the "obsession as to a League of Nations" (p. 209) grips his thought, he becomes self-willed, stubborn, "irritated by opposition to his views", unwilling to forgive opponents, and unable to "utilize the brains of other men" (pp. 11, 140, 201, 211, 215). He receives suggestions with a courteous smile and—like Strachey's Queen Victoria—changes the topic of conversation (pp. 22, 87). Toward Mr. Lansing this enigmatic character showed what a more sensitive Secretary of State might have considered to be contemptuous disregard. The preparation of peace data by Col. House's Inquiry betokened lack of confidence in the Department of State, but of that affront the Secretary seems to have been insensible (pp. 17-18). The famous typewritten draft of the Covenant was never shown to Mr. Lansing until January 6, 1919, when it was already in the hands of the official printer (pp. 79-80); neither reply nor even acknowledgment was vouchsafed to his importunate letters and memoranda respecting plans for the League (pp. 59, 119, 130); he knew less of the negotiations regarding the Covenant than did Col. House's office staff (p. 136); he first learned of the Shantung decision through the Chinese Delegation (p. 261)—and yet Mr. Lansing writes "possibly I was oversensitive" (p. 87)! He set the legal advisers of the delegation to work drafting a "skeleton treaty", only to be told by Mr. Wilson that the latter "did not intend to have lawyers drafting the treaty" (pp. 107, 199-200). In confessing this rebuff, Mr. Lansing at least implies that he never even knew of the existence of the "Black Book" prepared for the President by the American experts before the opening of the Peace Conference as an outline of the American program. Why Mr. Lansing did not resign, and why Mr. Wilson retained a Secretary of State in whom he placed so little confidence, can be explained only in terms derogatory to the characters of both.

Apparently Mr. Lansing had expected to head the delegation at Paris (p. 22). At the time of the armistice he urged the President not to go to France; when this advice was politely disregarded, he still opposed the President's personal participation in negotiations (pp. 22-27). Here the estrangement began. It was accentuated by Mr. Lansing's pertinacious opposition to the Wilsonian plan for a League of Nations. Mr. Lansing regarded the clause which later became Article X as utterly vicious in principle; he insisted on the equality of great and small powers; he wished to make judicial arbitration as opposed to "political compromises and diplomatic adjustments" the core of the scheme; he argued against any commit-

ment to uphold the Covenant by force; and at the end, when all else had failed, he endeavored to shelve the Covenant. In all these objections there was much that was "tainted with legalism", to use the author's words (p. 108). Mr. Lansing persisted in trying to cramp the new world-order into the formulæ of an obsolescent conception of the world as a constellation of absolutely independent, equal and indivisible sovereignties. For example, he repudiated the mandatory scheme as a "novelty", an unwarrantable "departure from the long-accepted idea of the essentials of statehood", explicable only by "lack of knowledge as to the nature of sovereignty" (pp. 83-84, 151-153). That Mr. Wilson dismissed such objections as "mere technicalities" (p. 151) was perhaps indicative less of petulance than of larger vision. Indeed, in more than one respect, Mr. Lansing betrayed his inability to view world-problems except through the astigmatic lenses of a false ideology. To him the primacy of the Great Powers in the League appeared as a denial of "democracy", a reversion to "international autocracy", because he thought of nations as legally equivalent sovereignties rather than as disparate aggregations of human beings. Much nonsense has been written by Mr. Lansing and others on the theme of the equality of nations; stripped of juristic verbiage, equality of nations in a world-parliament would be a "rotten-borough" system, fundamentally antithetical to democracy. For the reviewer it is difficult, and for the President it must have been impossible, to hear with patience Mr. Lansing's truly Metternichean denunciations of "the right of self-determination". The phrase, he declared, would destroy "fixity of national boundaries" and "political stability"; it "is simply loaded with dynamite" (pp. 96-97). Not a comprehension of the significance of national sentiment, but a very vulnerable argument as to legal rights, was Mr. Lansing's reason for opposing so strenuously the transfer of Germany's concessions in Shantung to Japan (ch. xviii). In this connection, by the way, Mr. Lansing states that "some" of the American plenipotentiaries "considered" resigning as a protest against the iniquitous Shantung settlement (p. 264). He also asserts his belief that Japan could not have carried through this bit of "blackmail" had the negotiations been public or had Mr. Wilson been courageous enough to call Japan's bluff (pp. 244-247).

The sensational Bullitt disclosures, Mr. Lansing admits, were not altogether false. The impetuous young journalist, it will be remembered, had quoted the Secretary of State as saying that if the Senate and the American people could really "understand what it lets them

in for", the treaty would be defeated. Mr. Lansing confesses to have said precisely this in slightly different words, but with the lame conclusion that "anything which was an obstacle to ratification was unfortunate because we ought to have peace as soon as possible" (p. 271). His idea was that a thoroughly bad peace was preferable to none, as he makes clear in a memorandum written at the time of the Bullitt interview (pp. 272-274). Writing copious memoranda in his private diary seems to have been one of the consolatory exercises with which the Second Plenipotentiary of the United States of America occupied his melancholy leisure in Paris.

Mr. Lansing's book is readable, though at times awkward in phraseology. That our former Secretary of State should refer to Austria-Hungary as "the Dual Empire" (p. 224), or should be unable to summarize correctly the famous treaty of 1915 between Italy and the Entente (p. 223), or should be ignorant that "the upper [erroneously meaning "northern"] portion of the Dobrudja" was really a part of Rumania's pre-war possessions (p. 194), is perhaps pardonable. Diplomats have so little time for geography.

What Really Happened at Paris, Col. House and the "experts" are better qualified to tell. This is by far the most informing single volume yet published on the Peace Conference. In comprehensive style it describes the work of that body's multifarious organs and discusses the decisions which were reached.

In these pages we see the other Mr. Wilson. If he was Mr. Hyde to Secretary Lansing, he was Dr. Jekyll to the experts. Professor Seymour testifies, "In contradistinction to Lloyd George and Clemenceau the President made constant use of his experts, and with few exceptions his decisions were based on the facts they furnished" (p. 457). Professor Young describes him as "supremely quick and alert" (p. 296). Dean Haskins warmly defends "the old Presbyterian" against Mr. Keynes's unfair animadversions (p. 449). Professor Johnson affirms that in the Adriatic question he kept "in constant touch with the experts" and acquired a "most astonishing command" of the "details and intricacies" of the problem (p. 459). President Wilson calling three American experts to his residence and telling them Clemenceau had called him a pro-German for his refusal to permit French annexation of the Saar, and asking the experts to help him find a just solution (p. 465), is not Mr. Lansing's Wilson. The gaunt figure bending over a large-scale map of Poland, while Dr. Bowman and Mr. Paton draw the boundaries of Danzig (p. 162), is not the Wilson of Mr. Keynes. Quite as refreshing is

the novel picture Professor Seymour paints of the Big Four on all fours over a gigantic map, spread on the floor, with experts beside them whispering advice (p. 101). It may be remarked in passing that with these choice vignettes belong Professor Seymour's portrait of the Council of Ten (pp. 93-94) and Dr. Bowman's description of the signing of the Bulgarian treaty (pp. 163-164).

Not unnaturally most of the contributors to this composite volume are predisposed to defend the work of the Conference. They are in a very personal sense special advocates. Thus Dean Haskins, the learned educator and medievalist who ably represented America in the negotiations respecting Germany's western frontier, may be expected to maintain stoutly that a plebiscite in Alsace-Lorraine would have been a wrong to France, and that internationalization of the Saar Basin was fundamentally just (ch. iii). It is difficult, however, to follow the Dean in his contention that the Saar Basin settlement was "a clear application of the principle of self-determination" (p. 64). In discussing the proposed military alliance with France, Dean Haskins emphasizes the fact "that assistance was to be given only in case of an *unprovoked* [his italics] attack" (p. 55); perhaps the distinction between "provoked" and "unprovoked" attacks was clearer in early Norman times than in these degenerate days. Professor Lord and Dr. Bowman tell how Lloyd George insisted that instead of being ceded outright to Poland, Danzig should be made a free port and the Marienwerder district submitted to plebiscite; it was Lloyd George again who first admitted the German demand for a plebiscite in Upper Silesia (pp. 72-80, 160-162). Professor Lord defends Poland against the charge of imperialism by pointing out that the so-called "Curzon line" was intended as a minimum, not a maximum, eastern limit for the new republic (pp. 84-85, 452), and by supporting Poland's claim to Vilna on ethnographic grounds. Of the division of Teschen between Poland and Czechoslovakia he writes, "This judgment of Solomon is a curious monument of the wisdom of diplomats" (p. 83); and truly it was, for the municipal gas-works went to one nation and the electric plant to the other. Professor Seymour frankly recognizes the departures from the rule of nationality in Tyrol and Czechoslovakia, but gives economic reasons for the latter (ch. v). To replace the Hapsburg monarchy as a coördinating agency in the dangerous Balkanized area of east-central Europe, the proposed League of Nations was "a concrete necessity" (p. 111), says Professor Seymour in contradiction of Mr. Lansing's caustic remark that "the League has been made a con-

venient 'catch-all'" in order to give it "something to do" and "to save it from extinction" (p. 145). Professor Johnson, the topographical expert of the American staff, convincingly justifies the American stand against Italian claims to Fiume and Dalmatia (ch. vi), but does not divulge the "inside story" of President Wilson's historic manifesto on that subject, the manifesto which fell like a bombshell on the public. Quite naturally Professor Johnson gives more attention to strategic geography than do his colleagues, and on the other hand his pen is weaker in dealing with political affairs; he would do well to revise his statement of the attitude of "the great mass of the people" in Italy at the time of their entry into the war (p. 113). Chapter Six, by Dr. Bowman, Chief Territorial Expert, is the most interesting of the lot. He not only covers his topic, "Constantinople and the Balkans", but takes occasion to insert extremely vivid though sometimes irrelevant remarks on "map forgeries" (p. 142), the projected French protectorate over Ukraine (p. 151), Great Britain's shrewd eye for business (pp. 153, 162-163), the drawing of Germany's boundaries by British and American experts in his own office (p. 160), Lloyd George's dramatic veto of the experts' recommendations for Poland (pp. 160-163), and Clemenceau's angry altercation with Wilson over the Left Bank question, in course of which the Tiger called the President a pro-German (p. 465). Dr. Bowman was in a peculiarly advantageous position to observe the hidden intrigues which are still so scantily known. To return to the Balkans with Dr. Bowman, we learn that American protests were overridden after Mr. Wilson's departure from Paris. American protests were least effective of all in the problem of Asiatic Turkey, as Professor Westermann, the American expert on that area, makes it painfully evident; his description of economic imperialism and secret diplomacy triumphant in the Levant is deeply tinged with disappointment (ch. viii).

Of the seven chapters pertaining to economic and general aspects of the peace terms, probably the most edifying is that on the League (ch. xvii) by Mr. David Hunter Miller, the legal partner of Col. House's son-in-law. As legal adviser to the American Peace Commission, Mr. Miller took a very important part in the negotiations regarding the Covenant as well as other matters. That Mr. Miller and Dr. James Brown Scott prepared a draft of a covenant in January, 1919, "by direction of Mr. Lansing" (p. 402) is one of the facts Mr. Lansing conceals in his own story, for what reason one can only conjecture. The draft used as a basis for discussion by the

Peace Conference's commission on the League was not President Wilson's own handiwork, as it is popularly supposed, but an alloy prepared by Mr. Miller and Mr. Hurst (British legal adviser) from the Wilsonian scheme and its British rival (pp. 404-407). How the above-mentioned international commission modified this Hurst-Miller draft and gave the small powers four seats on the League Council, how France contended in vain for an international military force or at least a joint general staff, how Mr. Wilson sat silent while Lord Robert Cecil vetoed Japan's plea for racial equality, how Col. House served as the silent but sagacious "pilot" of the ark of the Covenant, how Mr. Wilson by a "witching" extempore oration after the witching hour one night carried the Monroe Doctrine amendment—are only a few of the revelations which make this chapter entertaining as well as informing.

Less dramatic in appeal, yet almost if not quite as significant, are Professor Hudson's account of the little-known treaties for the protection of minorities (ch. ix), Mr. Lamont's discussion of reparations (ch. xi), Professor Young's exposition of the economic settlement (xii), Mr. Gompers's self-laudatory panegyric of America's contribution to the labor clauses (xiii). Mr. Lamont tells how Mr. Wilson, exclaiming "I don't give a damn for logic!" (p. 272), decided to concede the claim for pensions, after he had courageously blocked the Anglo-French move to include war costs in the reparations bill. During the reparations negotiations Clemenceau and Lloyd George actually warned the President that they would be turned out of office by irate constituents were the sum of the indemnity to be definitely fixed (p. 264). It may also be worth noting that Mr. Lamont involves himself in apparent self-contradiction when he states that Germany's indisputable liabilities would have exceeded her ability to pay (p. 261), whereas on another page he gives the American estimate of material damage to be repaired as fifteen billion dollars (p. 275) and Germany's ability to pay as thirty billions (p. 276). Moreover, his optimism regarding the reasonable moderation of the indemnity (pp. 286-288) is not quite consonant with Professor Young's blunt statement that Germany cannot meet the payments demanded of her (p. 301). Dr. James Brown Scott's paper on an event that never occurred — "The Trial of the Kaiser" — is of interest chiefly as showing that President Wilson stood "as a rock" against punishment of the Kaiser (pp. 237, 478-479). As a jurist, Dr. Scott defends this stand; he goes so far as to claim that Holland has done the world a service in sheltering the ex-emperor (pp. 245-

246, 475). Less with William II than with the general militarism of Europe rests the grave responsibility for causing the recent war, believes General Bliss. After an amazingly candid arraignment of militarism as a compelling cause of war and a menace to civilization, this soldierly anti-militarist warns us that if we do not take steps toward disarmament—"then you and your sons and brothers did not fight to destroy an overgrown militarism, but only German militarism. You will have killed one giant only to set up five more in his place" (ch. xvi). Than this there is no more straightforward or more vital message in the entire volume. In a concluding chapter, Col. House frankly admits that the disarmament question was "shunted" by the Peace Conference (p. 433), that secret diplomacy was a mistake (p. 435, *cf.* Professor Day's apology for secrecy, p. 32), that England is possibly too conservative about freedom of the seas (p. 439), and that we have not got such freedom now (p. 440).

From the two books under review several conclusions may be drawn. First, President Wilson was far less unapproachable to his expert advisers than to his Secretary of State, and with good reason. Secondly, it appears to be proved that President Wilson and the American staff were not such ineffective academic utopians as it has seemed "smart" for critics to assert. One can no longer deny either that the Americans accomplished something of value by their manful battle against "secret treaties" and the greedy myopia of European nations, or that, on the other hand, they deliberately consented to compromises discordant with their declared principles. And, finally, it is obvious that the "experts" were not impervious to human emotions. They were scholars hastily and in some cases injudiciously summoned from their books to legislate for an anarchic world. Some were well prepared, some ill, and certainly not all were the foremost American authorities in their respective fields. Yet as a rule they proved themselves more statesmanlike than many professional diplomats. Their advice and their diplomacy stiffened Mr. Wilson's resistance to unjust demands and made the treaty a less obnoxious document than it might else have been. What Mr. Wilson might have achieved had he possessed the faculty for teamwork, had he selected a more representative staff of experts and plenipotentiaries, had he evinced greater moral courage, is one of the melancholy might-have-beens of that tragi-comedy of errors which men call history.

PARKER THOMAS MOON.

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